

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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R 261451Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2855
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, CB, SW
SUBJECT: SWEDISH OFFICIALS SOUND OFF ON CAMBODIA

REF: (A) COPENHAGEN 490, (B) 77 STOCKHOLM 5437 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: SWEDISH PRESS HAS REPORTED ON SOME OF THE IMPRESSIONS GAINED BY KAJ BJORK, SWEDISH AMBASSADOR TO PEKING WHO IS ALSO ACCREDITED TO CAMBODIA, DURING HIS RECENT TRIP TO THAT COUNTRY WITH TWO NORDIC COLLEAGUES. ACCORDING TO PRESS, BJORK REPORTED THAT THE DIPLOMATIC GROUP WAS TREATED WITH KINDNESS BY CAMBODIANS, THAT RICE ACREAGE ALONG THE SAME ROADS HE TRAVELLED IN THE SPRING OF 1976 SEEM TO HAVE INCREASED, AND THAT THE NUMBER OF ARMED MILITARY AND MILITIA, AS WELL AS THE NUMBER OF CONTROL POSTS, HAVE BEEN REDUCED CONSIDERABLY SINCE HIS LAST VISIT.

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2. BJORK DESCRIBED PHNOM PENH AS NEARLY DESERTED. THE NORDIC VISITORS SAW SMALL VEGATABLE GARDENS CLOSE TO THE VILLAGE HUTS THEY VISITED, INDICATING THAT PREVIOUS POLICIES OF ABOLISHING ALL PRIVATE LAND CULTIVATION HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT MODIFIED. ASKED IF CAMBODIANS WERE AWARE OF FOREIGN INTEREST IN AND REACTION TO EVENTS

IN THEIR COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY TERRORISM, BJORK SAID THAT GOVERNMENT LEADERS WERE AWARE. HE IS EXPECTED TO DELIVER A MORE DETAILED PRIVATE REPORT TO GOS SHORTLY.

3. BJORK' RETICENCE TO GO INTO FURTHER DETAIL AT THIS TIME IS UNDOUBTEDLY A RESULT OF GOS EMBARRASSMENT AT THE PERSONAL COMMENTS OFFERED BY JEAN-CHRISTOPHE OBERG, SWEDEN'S AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND, WHO RECENTLY RETURNED FROM A WIDELY-BILLED "TOURIST" TRIP TO THAT COUNTRY, AND SPOKE IN POSITIVE TERMS OF DEVELOPMENTS THERE.

4. SWEDISH PRESS ALSO REPORTED SOME OF OBERG'S COMMENTS ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN MADE IN A CABLE TO SWEDISH MFA AND LEAKED TO DANISH DAILY JYLLANDSPOSTEN. IN THE REPORT, OBERG IS ALLEGED TO HAVE REFUSED TO APOLOGIZE FOR HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON CAMBODIA, POINTING OUT TO FOREIGN MINISTER KARIN SODER THAT SHE HAD ASKED HIM TO KEEP HIS EYES AND EARS OPEN, AND EXPLAINING THAT ALL HE SAW ON HIS 2,000 MILE JOURNEY WAS LIVELY ACTIVITY, INCLUDING NEW COLLECTIVE FARMS, INTENSIVE CONSTRUCTION WORK, AND MANY PEOPLE IN PRODUCTION. OBERG IS ALSO SAID TO HAVE DENIED SEEING PEOPLE DIGGING CANALS WITH THEIR BARE HANDS, CARRYING UNREASONABLE BURDENS, BEING USED AS DRAUGHT ANIMALS OR WORKING IN BRIGADES UNDER DURESS, AS REPORTED IN THE WESTERN PRESS.

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5. IN A REPLY TO A PARLIAMENTARY INTERPELLATION ON OBERG'S TRIP AND HIS SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA, FOREIGN MINISTER SODER TOLD PARLIAMENT ON JANUARY 19 THAT OBERG HAD INFORMED MFA IN LATE NOVEMBER THAT HE HAD BEEN INVITED BY CAMBODIA'S AMBASSADOR TO LAOS TO VISIT ANKOR WAT TEMPLES, AND THAT MFA HAD NO REASON TO OBJECT TO THIS "SHORT, PRIVATE VISIT." MRS. SODER ALSO REITERATED HER DECEMBER 29 STATEMENT TO SWEDISH PRESS THAT OBERG'S REMARKS ON CAMBODIA MUST BE CONSIDERED AS STATEMENTS "ON HIS OWN ACCOUNT," THUS DISASSOCIATING GOS FROM THEM. THE FOREIGN MINISTER ALSO ADDED THAT GOS DID NOT KNOW HOW MANY PERSONS HAD BEEN KILLED IN CAMBODIA AFTER THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER AS A RESULT OF FORCED EVACUATION OF THE CITIES, STARVATION, AND POLITICAL PURGES, BUT MENTIONED THAT PRESS REPORTS HAD QUOTED A FIGURE OF FROM SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND TO OVER ONE MILLION. SHE CONTINUED, "THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT MANY PERSONS HAVE SUFFERED IN CAMBODIA IN CONNECTION WITH THE MAJOR CHANGES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE IN THAT COUNTRY DURING THE 1970'S" END UNCLASSIFIED

6. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE: OFFICIAL SWEDISH REACTION IS ONE OF CAREFULLY BALANCED NEUTRALITY.

GOS APPEARS UNWILLING AT THIS STAGE TO DENOUE
HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS OCCURRING IN CAMBODIA IN
STRONG TERMS IN ABSENCE OF CLEARER EVIDENCE AS TO
WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE IN THAT COUNTRY, AND, MORE
IMPORTANTLY, A FIRMER REACTION TO THESE EVENTS FROM
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. AT THE SAME TIME, SWEDISH
AUTHORITIES ARE AWARE THAT THERE MUST BE SOME TRUTH
IN REFUGEE REPORTS OF MASSACRES AND ARE UNWILLING TO
IDENTIFY WITH VOICESUCH AS OBERG'S WHICH ARE WILLING
TO WHITEWASH THE SITUATION IN FAVOR OF THE PRESENT
CAMBODIAN REGIME. ON BASIS PUBLISHED REPORTS THUS FAR
OF BJORK'S PUBLIC REMARKS, EMBASSY WOULD NOT AGREE
WITH DANISH MEDIA CONCLUSION THAT THE "ONE SWEDE"
(BJORK) IN THE AMBASSADORIAL GROUP" PERSISTED IN
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PRAISING CAMBODIAN CONDITIONS" (REF A). WHEN COMPARED
TO OBERG'S REMARKS IN DECEMBER, BJORK'S ARE PERHAPS A
MODEL OF CIRCUMSPECTION. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
KENNEDY-MINOTT

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